

# INTRODUCTION TO LITURGY

Liturgy is the celebration of Faith. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, it is the Feast of Faith. It is the celebration of the mystery of salvation. This mystery is God's plan of salvation for the whole world. The Father accomplishes this plan by giving his beloved Son and his Holy Spirit for the salvation of the world and for the glory of his name (Eph 1:9). In the patristic tradition it is called the 'economy of salvation'. And this economy is a sacramental economy. The Church celebrates in the liturgy this economy of salvation.

## ***Etymology***

Liturgy comes from the Greek word 'leitourgia'. The word 'leitourgia' (λειτουργια) in classical Greek means a function (εργον) undertaken on behalf of the people (λαος). Thus the word originally meant a 'public work' or a 'service in the name of /on behalf of the people'. The ancients employed the term 'leitourgia' for any work, such as building a bridge or road or bathhouse, done on behalf of the common good, that is to say for the entire city or empire.

Although it had originally a profane significance, already from the beginning we find that this word had an indirect **religious connotation** because these public celebrations were accompanied by religious services. The cultic act performed in the beginning of the celebrations was given great importance in these public civic activities and gradually the term 'leitourgia' began to be applied more and more to the religious ceremony. In the course of time the profane meaning of the term was lost sight of and it began to acquire almost exclusively religious and cultic significance. In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in the work of God. Through the liturgy, Christ our redeemer and high priest continues the work of our redemption in, with and through his Church.

## ***Leitourgia in the New Testament***

In the New Testament this term is used altogether 15 times in different forms. We can distinguish four different meanings of the term in the Greek version of the N.T.

**(a) The popular sense of rendering a service:** Rom 13:6 (paying tax); 15:27 (acts of charity); Phil 2:30 (apostolic ministry); 2 Cor 9:12 (alms giving). All the texts we have quoted above refer directly to material service. Therefore it is best to see in them the popular sense of rendering a service.

**(b) The Old Testament cultic sense** (Lk 1: 23; Heb 8: 6; 9:21; 10: 11). We find this usage especially in the letter to the Hebrews. The author of the letter is deeply rooted in the outlook and vocabulary of the O.T. cult. He contrasts it with the ministry of Jesus, which is superior to the ministry of the levitical priesthood.

**(c) The cult of the New Testament** (Acts 13, 2). Although the reference may not be to a Eucharistic celebration, it obviously refers to a fellowship of prayer in the Christian Church at Antioch. It was also, we may infer from the context, an act of worship offered by the community in its official capacity. Hence the term here refers to the cultic action of the new community, which replaces the old one.

**(d) The spiritual cult of the Christian** (Rom 15:16; Phil 2:17). This is a completely new meaning attributed to this term by Christian writers. Christian life itself is considered here as an act of worship, it may be noted that Paul connects this act of 'leitourgia' with the sacrificial act of Christ on the cross.

## ***Liturgy in the New Economy***

The new cult inaugurated by Christ is an act that involves the whole person; it is an act of pleasing obedience to the Father. The Christian offers in imitation of and together with Christ, an acceptable worship to the Father thus substituting the worship of the Old Testament, which was predominantly ritual. **Worship in the new economy has acquired a new meaning.** While in the Old Testament the term is used for the official ritual worship of the people of God, in the New Testament it is applied to the action of the new community offering its worship in Spirit and truth (Jn 4:24). The stress has been

shifted from rite to the Spirit. Christ is the only 'leitourgos' and his sacrificial offering was the highest act of cult that could be offered by man to God (Cf. the letter to the Hebrews). Christians, being members of Christ, share in the sacrificial action of Christ and become a community of priests: "Through the blood of Jesus we have the right to enter the sanctuary"(Heb 10:19).

### ***Response to the action of God***

Christian worship is not the product of the human spirit: it is something that comes from above. What the Christian is asked to do is only to respond to the action of God. Hence it is not a mere exercise of the natural virtue of religion; it is the manifestation of the internal dynamism of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in him. He prays, lives and moves in the Spirit, and thus the whole of Christian existence in its totality becomes a spiritual worship. The prayer and the life of the Christian community are presided over by the Spirit of God. It is gathered together in prayer and witnesses to Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The ritual element is not excluded from it: it is present as the sign through which the dynamism of the Spirit becomes visible.

From the New Testament writings we have examined we saw that the term 'leitourgia' was used to mean the whole Christian life. From the Acts of the Apostles we know that the life of the early Church was firmly based on two cardinal points: **the celebration of the Eucharist and life of charity**. These two elements gave unity to Christian existence and they represented the same Christian reality under two different aspects. The Eucharist was the climax of the life of charity. Probably because of this the term 'leitourgia' was used in the immediate post-apostolic period to signify the Eucharist. Hence, Liturgy in its original New Testament sense of worship, is **the totality of Christian life lived under the impulse of the Spirit of the risen Lord**.

### ***Different Definitions of Liturgy***

**1) Aesthetic Definition** "Liturgy is the sensible, ceremonial and decorative part of Catholic worship". The value of the liturgy consisted in its ability to evoke the piety and

devotion of the faithful. The perfect liturgy was, therefore, that celebration which had all the outward forms of solemn divine worship.

**2) Juridical Definition** "Liturgy is the cult of the Church which is carried out according to the norms of the Church". This definition reflects a juridical mentality. The liturgist, according to this concept, is the master of ceremonies and the study of the liturgy, to a great extent, consisted in the study of the rites under its juridical, historical and symbolical aspects.

The encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII, "*Mediator Dei*" (1947) rejects both the aesthetical and juridical definitions because they reduce liturgy either to external rites and ceremonies or to a mere collection of laws that we call rubrics.

MD 25. It is an error, consequently, and a mistake to think of the sacred liturgy as merely the outward or visible part of divine worship or as an ornamental ceremonial. No less erroneous is the notion that it consists solely in a list of laws and prescriptions according to which the ecclesiastical hierarchy orders the sacred rites to be performed.

### **3) Theological Definitions**

- a) Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960) defined liturgy as the cult of the Church.
- b) Dom Odo Casel (1886-1948) maintained that the paschal mystery itself is experienced through the liturgy, in which Christ himself is present and acts through the Church while the Church acts with him. Liturgy is the reenactment of the saving action of Christ. The **stress here is on what** happens in the worship of the Church and **not on how** it is performed (the manner in which the Church performs the acts of worship).
- c) Jean Jacques von Allmen says that Christ continues his saving work by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the liturgy, which is the epiphany of the Church.
- d) Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) says that the purpose of worship is to constitute the Church...to express the Church as the unity of that Body whose Head is Christ and with one mouth and one heart to serve God.
- e) Edward Kilmartin states that liturgy is primarily the exercise of the life of faith under the aspect of being together...

f) Pius XII (MD 20) declared that the liturgy is the continued exercise of the priestly office of Christ, the public cult that Christ the Redeemer offers to the Father through Christ, and the public cult of the whole Mystical Body, Head and members.

g) The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) repeats and develops the teaching of Pius XII and describes liturgy as “an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of human beings is manifested by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which is proper to each of these signs; in the liturgy full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is by the Head and his members” (SC 7)

The liturgy aims at “the sanctification of human beings and the glorification of God” (SC 10).

The constitution also states that “the liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows” (SC 10).

The Council wants that the faithful “be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy” (SC 14).

### ***The theology of liturgy according to Vatican II***

The Constitution ‘*Sacrosanctum Concilium*’ is perhaps the first solemn declaration of the Church on the theology of worship. Its doctrinal content is not however, essentially different from that of ‘*Mediator Dei*’. The difference is only in some new perspectives and in the emphasis laid on some particular aspects. We shall examine some of the characteristics of this theology.

1. In the first place, we find that it is not mere formulation of abstract principles. It is presented in a biblical perspective. A close examination of articles 5 & 6 of the Constitution will clearly manifest this. **Liturgy is presented as the culmination of salvation history.** The nature of liturgy is described by showing its relationship to the

various stages of the history of salvation. The liturgy is presented here not only as something closely related to salvation history, but as the point of arrival of all that God had planned and realized in this world for the sake of man.

2. Secondly, we find that the **sign character** of liturgy is very much stressed here. The saving work of Christ continues to become visible in the world throughout the centuries in ritual actions: word and sacrament (S.C. 7). The liturgy is part of the economy of salvation which is sacramental.

3. Third, we find that liturgical action is presented in the Constitution under an **ecclesial perspective**. The post-Tridentine liturgy was more ecclesiastical and less ecclesial. According to the Constitution, in and through the liturgy the Church becomes visible as the 'ecclesia' or the assembly of the people of God (SC 2). Instead of being a vertical action, directed by the Church to God, it acquires a horizontal dimension, constituting the very community that is called together for worship. The constant mention of the 'active participation of the faithful in the liturgy' is indicative not only of the fact that the liturgy is a communitarian act of worship, but also that it is a community-building action.

4. Finally, the Liturgical Constitution has given to liturgical celebration a perspective that was its characteristic in the early Church, namely its **eschatological dimension** (S.C. 8). Liturgy is the action of the pilgrim Church journeying towards the Promised Land.

However, despite the liturgical renewal before Vatican II, the role of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy of the Church has not received due attention even in the document of Vatican II. Lack of attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy is typical of the liturgical movement in the Church of the West, and for that matter of the theology and the faith-experience of the West in general. In the otherwise excellent schema on the liturgy submitted to the Council Fathers for discussion, not a word was said of the role of the Holy Spirit. It was left to Eastern Council Fathers to point out this deficiency so that only at the last moment was mention of the Holy Spirit inserted. None of these mentions, however, tells us anything about the peculiar task of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy itself.

Fleeting attention of this type does not do justice to the place of the Holy Spirit in the Church as a worshipping community.

### ***Historical survey of the liturgy***

The liturgy is necessarily as old as the Church. But only the innermost nucleus of Christian worship was enacted by Christ himself. All other developments were added by the Church during the course of the centuries. The liturgy of its very nature is conservative, since it is a sacred ministry. Forms once laid down appear to be somewhat sacred. They are preserved and transmitted unchanged as far as possible. Thus we cannot understand properly the Christian liturgy without its historical development.

In the first three centuries fixed liturgical texts did not exist. The president of the assembly was free to make the formulas of the ceremony. But from the 4<sup>th</sup> century on, fixed texts became more and more the rule. Indeed, they probably also became a necessity with the continued expansion of the Church and spread of heresies. The more or less uniform type of Liturgy used everywhere before crystallized into four parent rites from which all others are derived. The four are the old Liturgies of Antioch, Alexandria, Rome and Persia.

### ***Lex orandi lex credendi***

*Lex orandi lex credendi* is based upon the argument used by Prosper of Aquitaine (c 435) a monk who served as a secretary to Leo the Great (ut legem credendi statuatur lex supplicandi). The worship that we celebrate in our churches is linked to our theology. The service articulates our faith, what we believe and how we believe. But at the same time the service nourishes our faith and shapes both the innermost faith of our hearts and the way that we, by word and deed, express what we believe in. God has not handed on to us a ready-made “faith package” that we can receive or reject. God has given us his Spirit in order to allow us to grow and mature in faith according to our own abilities and circumstances. We need one another in the fellowship of the service in order to relate our faith in Jesus, the Lord and Saviour, to our own lives today. Theology needs liturgy in order to develop

from that which is at the very heart of the Christian faith, from Jesus Christ. And it is in liturgy that we gain a living encounter with him. Otherwise we remain locked up in our own chambers of study. Theology emerges from worship. The service of worship is seen as that activity in which God is pre-eminently at work in us to strengthen our faith and to guide us. The service is the source from which faith is nourished.

During the early Christian period we could say that the theological teachers, those we usually call the Church Fathers, took the liturgy as their starting point for developing their teaching about God and man, about heaven and the about the world. It was through “the glasses” of the liturgy that they contemplated God and surveyed the world. They believed that the experience of meeting God through liturgy was important for the development of theology. We could say that they claimed an organic connection between Christian doctrine and the experience of worship.

Thus, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, is a phrase that describes this link, this living relationship between what we believe and how we pray. For the Fathers, liturgy is not an object for theology to investigate and define, but rather, the living wellspring and the ultimate criterion for the credibility of theology. Ireneus, one of the Early Church Fathers writes for example: “Our view is consonant with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms that which our view is”. The Christian faith is shaped and developed through the continuous meeting with God in worship. God is present when we worship and through his Spirit God is at work in his church in order to strengthen our faith.



# Chapter I

## THE PLACE OF CULT

### IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF MAN

The word 'cult' is taken here to mean a religious rite in general. It expresses the most fundamental of human attitudes because it is the manifestation of a relationship, which touches the very roots of man's existence, namely, his relationship with God. It affects the totality of his being. He makes use of signs and symbols in order to express this exteriorly. Cult or worship is the expression of the religious life of man.

Worship is the self-portrayal of religion. In worship the sources by which religion lives are made visible; its expectations and hopes are expressed, and the forces, which sustain it, are made known. In many respects the essence of a religion is more directly intelligible in its worship than in the statement of its basic principles or even in descriptions of its sentiments.<sup>1</sup>

The signs and symbols that man uses in his worship should not be understood merely as expressions of a static relationship with God. All the religious rites performed by man, had a purpose to achieve. This consisted in the realization of his union with God, which we call 'salvation'. Thus, worship for man was a means of achieving salvation. In fact, an analysis of religious rites will show how closely worship is connected with salvation, the ultimate aim of every religious act. We shall examine the cultic act of man and see how he symbolically expresses his relationship with the divinity and how, through these signs, he arrives at union with God. In every act of cult we can distinguish the following elements:

1. **It is a human action** in which man apprehends himself as a religious being, that is, an action by which he expresses his relationship with God. We can distinguish two different manifestations of this

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<sup>1</sup> Gerard D. Delling, *Worship in the New Testament* (London 1962), p.xi.

relationship: one is that of a man who realizes that he is dependent on God for his being. Here we have worship or cult expressed in attitudes of submission, devotion, respect and veneration. Man experiences the Holy, the other, the Transcendent, and he feels a deep sense of awe and respect. Cult, here, is the *Mysterium tremendum*. The second manifestation is a need which man feels in himself for God as a consequence of the insufficiency of his being. He yearns for God as the source of his happiness and fulfilment. Here we have religious life expressed in acts of love, meditation, etc. Cult, here, is the *Mysterium fascinans*. The stress here evidently, is on immanence. However, in all these there is a common element: man discovers his inferiority and state of dependence confronted with the superiority and excellence of God.

2. **It is a divine action**, which God performs through and in man. God is believed to descend into the midst of men through ritual signs. The sacred becomes present in the awareness of the worshipper or the worshipping community, as the power of one who safeguards, preserves, renews or rejuvenates existence, not only in man, but also in nature and in the universe. Here we have the explanation for the mysterious reverence in which certain rites were held by men. We may also find here the reason for the unintelligible character of certain ritual actions and words, especially in primitive cults. They are divine actions and therefore, man cannot understand them fully.
3. It is an act in which man feels that he is **sharing in the divine activity**. Cult is considered as an action, in which both God and man act. The rites represent both the upward movement of man and the downward movement of God. When the worshipper offers the sacrifice, he expects a visible manifestation of God's acceptance of it by some signs. The presences of certain omens, such as the flight of birds over the victim or the straight ascent of the smoke or even the participation in the sacrificial banquet are considered as signs of divine acceptance.

4. The participation in worship transforms man. He becomes a real sharer in the sacred. He feels that he is given special powers by participating in the sacred rites. This is evident in the case of certain Hindu sacrifices (e.g. *Aswamedha* or horse sacrifice). Not only is man transformed, but the effect of the cultic act is believed to be felt also in the cosmos. The act of worship is considered as a means of salvation and cosmic order. It is not possible for man to reach perfect salvation unless he is all right in his relationship with God and the cosmos. The act of cult therefore, is expected to bring about harmony between man and God as well as between man and the cosmos.
5. Finally, it is important to note that these acts, by which man tries to establish contact with the divinity, are symbolic gestures. This follows from the very nature of the cultic actions themselves as well as from the participants of this action, namely God and man, who belong to two completely different orders of being.

All these five elements are found in the act of worship of all religious traditions. Only the basis of the act of worship is different from each other.

1. In the non-biblical religion's the encounter between God and man' takes place on the level of mythical narrations and philosophical speculations. Worship here is ritualistic or meditative.
2. In Israel, this encounter takes place on the level of historical events; worship in the O.T. therefore is the renewal of the historical events, especially of the Covenant.
3. In the New Testament the encounter is on a personal level; worship is centered on the Person and is expressed through signs of personal relationship.
4. In the Church the meeting between God and man takes place on the level of the community; worship here is communitarian and is expressed through signs of belonging among the members of the

community gathered together in the name of Christ. At the end of time there will be the final meeting between God and man in Christ, which will result in an irrevocable and perfect union. Worship, then, will be the celebration of this union.

The Christian worship inaugurated by Jesus Christ does not wipe out or render the primitive notion of the sacred meaningless in spite of all its deficiencies and distortions. The primitive cult remains valid as stepping stone to the perfect sanctuary inaugurated by Christ. Hence it would be wrong to discard non-Christian cult as something absolutely erroneous. It has many things in common with the Christian cult in as much as both are human. Like everything human, it too can be divinized and is being divinized. The Christian religion does not exclude human values, but transforms them. But it is not possible to do so without a proper appreciation of the values they contain.

### ***The nature of Christian Liturgy***

To understand correctly the nature and function of the liturgy in the Christian economy, it is indispensable to have a clear view of it in relation to the grand perspectives of Christian revelation. The way by which God is communicated to us and by which man reaches to God as his end, and hence attains to his own salvation, is not left to man's whim and fancy. It is in no way left to man's free choice. On the contrary, it is objectively imposed upon him. It is decided not only by his own nature, and therefore by God as Author of that nature, but also by the positive free will of God. Man, if he wishes to be saved, cannot do otherwise than to accept freely this objective route mapped out by God, submitting himself to it as to a given fact. This is called the law of objectivity.

The subject has value only if it is governed and measured by the object. This normative reality, imposed upon us by God as the means and the measure of our approaching Him, is Christ the incarnate Son of God. It is the Scriptures; the sacraments; the Church. This law of objectivity characterizes the whole liturgy, as the medium of our relations with God. The liturgical reality is Christ; Christ, who was immolated and is now

glorious, is present; Christ, who transmits His own divine life, really and objectively. It is Christ, who exercises His mediation in a defined manner, under the veil of things sensible and symbolic.

### ***Full efficacy of the liturgy***

Of course, our own self and our freedom come into play also. It is precisely our own self, our own free personality that God demands of us. But the ways of modern man are, nevertheless, entirely concentrated upon the law of subjectivity. The modern world is interested only in research into subjective experience; and to this alone does it accord any value. In its more radical forms, this tendency regards the object as a secondary and negligible thing, a mere reflection of the subject. But the liturgical action is a reality, which is completed only in dependence upon an objective reality, in which it finds its impetus and its norms. The world of the liturgy strongly affirms the axiom that for man there is neither creativity nor conquest if there has been no previous submission, not only to the laws of nature, but also to the norms freely and positively determined by God.

The liturgy can have its full effect only in a climate in which the transcendent majesty of the object strongly dominates the psychology of the subject. There is a specifically Catholic balance in the pairing of subject and object; a balance which affirms quite forcefully the reality and the distinction of the two poles without permitting the suppression of one of the terms in favour of the other. In fact, the liturgy places a strong emphasis on the objective norm of salvation as given independently to the subject. It is concerned with leading the subject to his decisions, to his personal acts and to his individual psychological situation. But this whole subjective aspect is strongly conceived as the required response of the subject to the objective norm which God has set before him. It is considered as an attuning of the subject to the liturgical reality, always on the primary level of consciousness, as an accepting of this reality, as a participating in it. Thus the liturgy is not so much concerned with constant psychological introspection and the analyzing of one's own psychic status, as with directing its attention and its gaze to God the objective reality. Therefore, the basic problem confronting the liturgy today is

this: how to lead Christians to a renewed vigour, how their personal and individual subjectivity is to relate to the objectivity of the liturgical reality.

### ***Theocentric character of the liturgy***

The ultimate aim of the liturgy is to glorify God. God is the beginning of all worship, for it is he who takes the initiative in drawing us again to himself; but he is also the great end towards which all liturgical celebration is directed. The final object of such celebration is to praise and glorify the Father. Drawing inspiration from the definition of *Mediator Dei* the Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council declares in its first chapter: "Christ indeed always associates the Church with himself in this great work, wherein God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is his beloved Bride, who calls to her Lord and through him offers worship to the Eternal Father" (S.C 7).

In fact, the aim of worship coincides with the aim of creation. God has created everything for his own glory. The whole life of man must therefore be directed towards the recognition of the absolute Lordship of the God-Creator. Man thus recognizes God as his supreme Lord, and offers him spoken or unspoken glorification and praise. This utter sense of dependence attains its cultic expression in worship. Here men come together quite consciously and expressly in order to say and to sing that they are dependent on him, and that their whole being is directed towards him. Liturgy is in the last resort honouring, praising and worshipping God. Praise therefore is the very substance of the liturgical prayer.

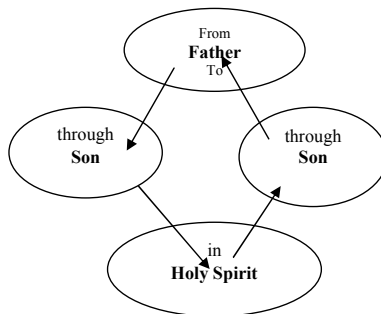
Man, however, through original sin, had denied God the recognition and honour that was his due. A pure life oriented towards God and the cultic expression of that life in worship became impossible. Only through Christ was this possibility restored. As the first new man he spent his earthly life in total submission and obedience to his Father and in doing so offered him, especially through the Paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, the worship that was due to him. In the liturgy now Christ continues the priestly task of worship.

## Chapter II

### The Trinitarian Basis of the Liturgy

It is relatively easy to understand that in the absence of the Christological sense it would be impossible to penetrate the world of the liturgy. But to many people it will seem much less apparent that in order to enter into the liturgy in an intimate way, this Christological sense must be coupled to a Trinitarian sense. Because, many Christians regard the Trinity as the most abstract and impenetrable mystery of our faith. And for this reason it has been regarded as the mystery farthest removed from the concrete affairs of our daily lives. Thus, for many people, God is the God of the philosophers or, perhaps, the God of the Jews rather than the Christian God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Revelation teaches us, in the first place, that the God who saves us and whom we worship is God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the second place, this same revelation discloses to us a wonderful beam of light, which rests upon the whole cycle of relations between that Trinitarian God and each one of us. To describe this cycle in brief: every good gift comes to us from the Father, through the medium of Jesus Christ His incarnate Son, in the presence of the Holy Spirit; and likewise, it is in the presence of the Holy Spirit, through the medium of Jesus Christ the incarnate Son, that everything must return to the Father and be reunited to its end, the most blessed Trinity. This is the Trinitarian activity of the sacred history of salvation.



The whole structure of the liturgy presupposes this activity, without which the liturgy would be incomprehensible.

### ***Trinity and Unity***

The dogma of the Trinity has two terms: **numerical unity of nature**, and **a Trinity of persons really distinct**. The mystery, properly speaking, is in how to reconcile these two terms. But precisely because it comprises two antithetical terms, the unity of nature and the trinity of persons really distinct, this dogma can be correctly formulated in two ways, the one as perfectly orthodox as the other: but between the two there is an important diversity of psychological gradations in the various ways in which this mystery will be approached and in how it will become a part of our lives.

In fact, in formulating this mystery, it is possible to start psychologically from the unity of nature and mentally subjoin to it afterwards, almost as a correction to the first affirmation, the trinity of Persons really distinct. Thus I might say: in God the nature is numerically one, although faith assures me that in this unity of nature there subsist three Persons really distinct.

For one who so considers and so formulates the mystery of the Trinity, it is the unity of God's nature, which occupies the first level of his psychological attention. It constitutes the basis for his point of departure, and admits of no debate; a basis which seems clear and certain enough because it is within the grasp of philosophical reasoning. At the same time, the trinity of persons really distinct, in the psychological attention of one who proceeds in this fashion, will be relegated to a secondary level, almost like an appendix or a mere correction to the clear and psychologically more significant affirmation of the unity of the divine nature. It will be as if he were to say: a unity of divine nature, but of such kind that it does not impede the trinity of persons really distinct.

The psychological danger, which threatens anyone who adopts this manner of viewing the mystery of the Trinity, is that he may not take seriously enough, from a vital point of view, the real distinction of the three Persons in God. And in thinking of God, he



may take refuge in a psychology common to a philosopher or to a Jew, so much so that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and especially the Father and the Holy Spirit, may not be accorded a sufficiently vivid reality in his religious psychology. In the West, after St. Augustine, this manner of approaching the mystery of the Trinity prevailed.

There is, in fact, another possible way of formulating this same mystery of the Trinity, which does not take as its mental starting point the unity of nature. On the contrary, it follows the inverse process, begins with the trinity of Persons really distinct, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and, in a second psychological instant, afterwards subjoins the notion that these three Persons, while really distinct, subsist in a nature that is numerically one. In accord with this manner of approaching the Trinity, the distinction of the three Persons is at the primary level of the believer's consciousness. Here the problem which presents itself to the process of theological reasoning will be: how, in the face of the real distinction of the three Persons, to save the numerical unity of their nature, how to reduce the Trinity to a unity. Anyone who approaches the Trinity in this fashion will have an extremely strong and lively Trinitarian consciousness. His God will not be purely and simply the God of the philosophers or of the Jew, but most specifically the Christian God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, he will have to guard carefully against the danger of Arianism or Subordinationism.

It is easy to see, therefore, that each of these two ways has its advantages and its dangers. This situation is quite unavoidable in view of the fact that the Trinity is a mystery having two antithetical terms, through which, whatever point of view one chooses in his consideration of the Trinity, one must always and necessarily end up back at the mystery. This does not mean, however, that the choice of one or the other point of view is a matter of simple indifference and without its consequences for the manner in which one will live the mystery.

It is indeed a fact that the Trinitarian consciousness is psychologically more vivid in those who choose the second way, taking for their point of departure the distinction of Persons and placing this on the primary psychological level of affirmation. It is a fact also that in Scripture, in the Greek Fathers and in the pre-Augustinian Latin Fathers, the second way of thinking about the Trinity has been more prevalent.

## ***Ontological Trinity and Economic Trinity***

But this is not all. Besides this first matter of considering the Trinity beginning with the distinction of Persons, a matter evidently common to Scripture and to the liturgy, there is a second matter in Scripture itself, which constitutes the point of departure for an understanding of another aspect of the manner in which the liturgy considers the Trinity. This second matter can be formulated thus: in considering the Trinity. Scripture is not really concerned in a primary way with **what the Trinity is**, from the ontological point of view, nor even with the internal metaphysical structure of the Trinity, rather, its primary preoccupation is with knowing **what are the Trinity's relations with the world**, what is the practical significance which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have for the history of the world and for our own personal moral living.

Truly, there are intimate connections between the internal nature of a thing on the one hand, and the relations of this same thing with other things distinct from it, its importance for others, which is its practical significance for others on the other hand. It is not the intratrinitarian aspect of the divine Persons that is at the first level of the Trinitarian concerns of Scripture, but the extratrinitarian aspect, the relations of the divine Persons ad extra, we might say, the relationships of the divine Persons with sacred salvation history, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Church.

### ***A Patre, per Filium eius, Jesum Christum, in Spiritu Sancto, ad Patrem***

*A Patre, per Filium eius, Jesum Christum, in Spiritu Sancto, ad Patrem* — such is the primordial and predominant aspect under which the New Testament speaks of the Trinity. In this broad perspective of sacred history of the *exitus a Deo* and of the *reditus ad Deum*, the Father appears primarily as the one **a quo and ad quem**, the Son as the one **per quem** and the Holy Spirit as the one **in quo**.

It must also be carefully noted that in this manner of considering the Trinity, the Son is primarily the **Incarnate Son Jesus Christ**, viewed in relation to the incarnation and to the work of redemption. Thus it can be said that there is a Trinitarian-

Christological perspective, which dominates the Scriptural view of the world and of history.

"Blessed be the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing on high in Christ. . . . By His love He predestined us to be His adopted sons *through Jesus Christ*, in accord with the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glorious manifestation of His grace; . . . predestined us to contribute to the praise of His glory . . . in whom (Christ) you too . . . have believed and have received *the seal of the Holy Spirit*, who is the pledge of our inheritance . . . to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:3-14).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of the great love with which He has loved us, has recalled us to life *in Christ* . . . through whom we have both (Jews and Gentiles) obtained access *in one Spirit to the Father*. Therefore . . . you are citizens with the saints and in the family of God, an edifice built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone of which is the same Jesus Christ, on whom the whole edifice is firmly constructed and built up into a holy temple of the Lord; and you too are part of this structure which has become a dwelling place of God *in the Spirit*" ( Eph 2:4-5,18-22).

(Rom 8:3-17), (Gal 4:4-6), (1 Cor 6:19-20)

In fact, the explicit theory and actual practice of St. Paul is that the prayer of Christians, especially their prayer of thanksgiving, is made to the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, with the consciousness that it is not possible to do this without the active presence in us of the Holy Spirit. (See, for example. Col 3:17; Eph 5:18 ff; Eph 1:3-14; 5:20; 1 Tim 1:2; Rom 8:26ff; 6:18; Rom 6:25-27; 7:25; 1 Cor 1:4; 15:57).

And it is always in the living consciousness of this principle that the Christian finds the stronger and deeper specific motives which determine his moral conduct in the various circumstances of life (see, for example, Rom 8:8-18), or, in particular, of being kind and merciful (see, for example, Eph 4:30-5:2), of being solicitous to preserve unity among the brethren (Eph 4:1-16), or even more in particular, of fleeing adultery and immodesty.

It will be worthwhile, by way of example, to transcribe fully the reasoning of St. Paul on this last point:

"Neither the effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor the evil-tongued, nor the greedy will inherit the kingdom of God (*—ad Patrem*). And some of you were such; but you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (*—per Christum*) and in the Spirit of our God (*—in Spiritu*). . . . The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body; and God, who raised up the Lord, will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Now then, am I to make the members of Christ members of a harlot? By no means! . . . Or do you not

know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you (*—in Spiritu*), whom you have from God (*—a Patre*), and that you are not your own because you have been bought at a great price (*—per Christum*). Give glory to God (*—ad Patrem*), therefore, in your body" (1 Cor 6:10-20).

### ***The formula a, per, in, ad in ancient tradition***

It is this same formula and the same great Christological-Trinitarian perspective of sacred salvation history that put its stamp so deeply upon the religious consciousness of the first Christian generations. It was in these terms, when St. Clement of Rome(c 80 A.D) described for the Corinthians the establishment of the Church in the world:

"The Apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ (*—per Christum*), and Jesus Christ was sent from God (*—a Patre*). Christ, therefore, is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both of these orderly arrangements, then, are by God's will. Receiving their instructions and being full of confidence on account of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and confirmed in faith by the word of God, they went forth in the complete assurance of the Holy Spirit (*—in Spiritu*), preaching the good news that the Kingdom of God (*—ad Patrem*) is coming. Through countryside and city they preached; and they appointed their earliest converts, testing them by the spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers."

St. Ignatius of Antioch, writing about the year 110 A.D., was able to summarize for the Ephesians the meaning of the Christian life:

"You are like stones for a temple of the Father, prepared for the edifice of God the Father (*—ad Patrem*), hoisted to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross (*—per Christum*), using for a rope the Holy Spirit (*—in Spiritu*). Your faith is what pulls you up, and love is what leads you to God (*—ad Patrem*)."

Certainly for Ignatius this is no idle formula deprived of any vital force. In the enthusiasm of his approaching martyrdom he has not conceived the profound significance and worth of his coming immolation otherwise than in terms of the familiar Christological-Trinitarian perspective, in which everything comes from the Father, through Jesus Christ His Son, in the Holy Spirit, and returns then to the Father. Between 180 and 199 A.D., St. Irenaeus of Lyons formulated the law of the universal return to the Father in this way:

"This is the order and the plan for those who are saved... they advance by these steps: through the Holy Spirit they arrive at the Son and through the Son they rise to the Father."

From these texts, which could in fact be multiplied, it can easily be understood how the Christological-Trinitarian consciousness in the scriptural perspective of the formula a, per, in, ad operated efficaciously in the religious psychology of the earliest

Christian generations. Neither was this viewpoint forgotten in the fourth and fifth centuries, even if, by reason of the necessity of the anti-Arian polemic, the Fathers were now obliged to interpret this same formula more explicitly of the intratrinitarian life of the individual divine Persons and to direct their attention more to the eternal Word than to Christ. Here, for example, is how St. Athanasius and St. Gregory of Nyssa formulate the trinitarian law of the intervention of God in the world, one in terms quite general, the other much more precisely:

"The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit."

"Whatever operation passes from God to the creature . . . takes its origin from the Father, is continued by the Son, and is brought to completion in the Holy Spirit."

In the struggle, which the Church had at that time to carry on against those who were denying the divinity of the Holy Spirit, it was once more to the familiar scriptural perspective that the Fathers had recourse in their defense of the faith. The Holy Spirit is truly God, they argue: and in fact, it is because the Holy Spirit is present in us that we are conformed to the Word and, through the Word, to the Father; and it is precisely in this conformity that our deification consists; but this deification of ourselves, our participation in the divine nature could not be accomplished by one who were himself a creature.

"The Holy Spirit is the ointment and the seal with which the Word anoints and signs everything . . . . Thus signed, we rightly become partakers of the divine nature, as Peter says (2 Peter 1:4), and thus the creature becomes a sharer of the Word in the Spirit, and by the Spirit we are partakers of God . . . . Every time we say that we are partakers of Christ and partakers of God we mean that that unction and that seal which is in us is not of a created nature, but is of the Son, who joins us to the Father by the Spirit who is in Him . . . . If the Holy Spirit were a creature, there could be no communion of God with us through Him. On the contrary, we would be joined to a creature, and we would be foreign to the divine nature, as having nothing in common with it . . . . But if by participation in the Spirit we are made partakers in the divine nature, it is insanity for anyone to say that the Spirit has a created nature and not the nature of God. Indeed, this it is whereby those in whom He is, are made divine; and if He makes men divine, it cannot be doubted that His is the nature of God."(Athanasius)

This reasoning is common among the Fathers of that era. In those centuries the scriptural manner of considering the matter was so profoundly fixed in the minds of their contemporaries, so natural to their way of thinking that the Fathers were able to start out from it as from a principle already known and readily admitted by all, in their refutations of the errors of heretics.

In texts of more ancient origin it has an enormous preference for the consideration of the divine Persons in their extratrinitarian relations to the sacred history of salvation in

accord with the *a, per, in, ad* scheme. In these texts, therefore, the Christological-Trinitarian perspective is frankly dominant. It can be said, in fact, that this perspective constitutes the general basis for the liturgy's view of the world. Nevertheless, the anti-Arian controversies were the occasion of a certain shift of emphasis in the liturgy. It is precisely in view of Arianism that the liturgies begin to be preoccupied with a notable multiplication of affirmations, made in a second psychological instant, of the intratrinitarian equality of the Persons themselves, an equality advanced precisely as a denial of the Arian heresy. The general rule quite well observed in more ancient times is that the liturgical orations are directed to the Father through the mediation of Jesus Christ, our mediator supreme. This rule is based not only on ancient tradition but also ultimately upon the explicit exhortations of St. Paul, who wrote:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another by psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing sweetly to God in your hearts; and whatever you do in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col 3:16-17).

From this we understand the ancient structure of the liturgical prayer. The one who is praying addresses himself first of all to the Father, whom, most frequently in the very first words, he calls upon directly as Father, God, Lord, Lord God, etc.; and then he calls attention, to some of His attributes or to some of His interventions on our behalf, such as: Almighty, Eternal, Creator, who sent to us Your Son; who in the Old Testament worked such and such wonders. And therefore, right from the beginning, the prayer recalls a moment of salvation history, with the Father *ut a quo omnia*.

## Chapter III

### THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN THE LITURGY

Liturgy is a personal meeting with God, but "through Christ". We are touching on the aspect that makes our liturgy specifically Christian worship. Christ is generally seen as the great *Leitourgos*, as the Person who plays the principal part in the liturgical action. *Mediator Dei* defines the liturgy in terms of Christ and his redeeming work. In the introduction the Christological conception of the liturgy is announced; it is stated briefly:

"The Church continues the priestly office of Jesus Christ especially in the liturgy" (par. 3). But the conception becomes very prominent when Pius XII endeavours to give a definition of the nature of the liturgy. This definition runs:

"The sacred liturgy then is the public worship which our Redeemer, the head of the Church, offers to the heavenly Father, and which the community of Christ's faithful pays to its Founder, and through him to the Eternal Father; briefly it is the whole public worship of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, head and members" (par. 20).

In the paragraph that precedes the definition we find the motivation of its Christocentrism:

"In the whole conduct of the liturgy the Church has her divine Founder present with her. Christ is present in the august Sacrifice of the altar in the person of his minister, and especially under the Eucharistic species; he is present in the sacraments by his power which he infuses into them as instruments of sanctification; he is present finally in the prayer and praises that are offered to God in accordance with his promise: 'When two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them' (Matt. 18.20)".

If the Christocentric character of the liturgy is already so strongly, emphasized in *Mediator Dei*, it is not surprising that the Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council expounds the place of Christ in the liturgy still more pointedly and more deeply (S.C 7).

"To accomplish so great a work Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, the same now offering through the ministry of priests who formerly offered himself on the cross, but especially under the eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church, He is present lastly when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18.20).

And the text continues:

"Rightly then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ . . . From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest . . . is a sacred action surpassing all others" (S.C. 7).

### ***Priestly character of Christ***

Since we are defining the liturgy in its relation to Christ, we must first ascertain the priestly character of his Person and action. In the writings of the New Testament Christ is continually described as the invisible God become visible. It is one of the key ideas of the Gospel of St John: Christ interpreted his Father here on earth. The conclusion of the prologue runs: "No one has ever seen God: the only Son, who is in the bosom of

the Father, he has made him known" (1.18). When therefore Philip asks of the Master at the Last Supper "Show us the Father", he at once receives the reproof: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:8-9). His works are the works of the Father, and by doing them he reveals the glory of the Father. St Paul is no less clear on the point. He calls Christ the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15); who "was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (Phil 2:6). At the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, with reference to the Incarnation: "... In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son ... he reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature..." (Heb 1:2-3).

In Christ the invisible God comes among us in visible form. Therefore we may call him the sacrament of the Father, that is, the living sign of God's fatherly love. So the humanity of Christ veils his Godhead, and at the same time reveals it. In him God's fatherly love achieved concrete form. It becomes in him humanly visible. When we approach him with faith—for only through faith can we recognize the sign as a sign—we can gather from him, and at the same time experience, what God's fatherly love is for men. The Incarnation is not a mystery that limits itself to the one moment of conception in the womb of Mary, but one that continues forever in Christ; it is the mystery of the invisible God become bodily visible in his love for men.

### ***Christ as liturgical mystery***

We noted above, as characteristic of every liturgical celebration, a double direction: a descent of God to man, and an ascent of man to God. The descending and ascending line can be seen in the entire divine-human activity of Christ.

- i) The descending line is immediately plain. In Christ God descends to our level. God the distant becomes in Christ the graciously near; therefore Christ is the *Pontifex*, the great "Bridge-maker" who bridges over the infinite distance between God and man. Although himself God, he lowers himself to the utmost, and takes the form of a servant, the suffering servant of Yahweh, and subjects himself as a man in obedience to God



(Phil 2:6). He lays aside his divine riches, to become poor as we are. God's descent to man has gone in Christ to that uttermost limit, to the most complete emptying of self, whereby he not only brought himself down to the human level but also became the least of men and made himself small in ministering love that he might be at their service: "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt 20:28). On the Cross the emptying of self of the God-man attained its dramatic climax: obedience unto death for our sake. There he was supremely the servant of men; Matthew therefore follows this up immediately with: "and to give his life as a ransom for many" (v. 28). But for anyone who in faith approaches Christ as the sign of the Father and all his acts as so many signs of God's redeeming love for men, the sign is also an effectual and healing sign. The mystery of Christ's self-abasement then becomes at the same time the mystery of man's exaltation. God becomes man to "make us God"; he becomes poor to enrich us; he takes the form of a slave in order to bestow on us the freedom of the children of God.

- ii) Christ is not only the living sign of God, but he is also at the same time the new Adam, who as the representative of fallen mankind, as their Head and Leader, shows the way back to the Father. He comes to meet us from the Father, in order to lead us back to the Father. The Son of God, who by nature and from all eternity turns to the Father as a Son, becomes man so that he, a Son, can show us how to be sons also.

Through the union of the divine and human nature in one person, he is the one perfect man, the highest figure of the human race, who alone can offer the Father a fitting worship. Therefore, he is the "highest worshipper of the Father", "the supreme realization of all religion". It is here that we encounter the priestly character of the Person of Christ. As the first, as the Head and Leader of men, his whole life was recognition of God's

lordship, a surrender of himself to the will of the Father in dependent obedience, an ascent to him in homage and praise. The fundamentally liturgical attitude of Christ's life reaches its supreme moment in his death on the Cross. There the High Priest Christ celebrated his most sublime liturgy. For his dying on the Cross was the supreme act of religious surrender, was a rendering of worship to the Father. It is above all the sacrifice on the Cross that we must learn to see again as a *sacrificium laudis*, as a sacrifice of homage and praise whereby humanity through Christ, as its Leader and Head, recognizes its creaturely dependence on the Father. He appeared in our name as our Mediator before the Father. "I came from the Father and have come into the world; again I am leaving the world and going to the Father" (Jn 16:28). Christ is accordingly at one and the same time:

i. A living sign of God: *a Patre*; coming from the Father, sent by the Father, to show his redeeming love to men.

ii. A forerunner of humanity: *ad Patrem*, as the first of a new humanity he offers to the Father the worship that is due to him, and so he precedes mankind on the way back to the Father.

Vatican II likewise emphasizes the double orientation of Christ's Person: "In him the perfect achievement of our reconciliation came forth, and the fullness of divine worship was given us"(SC 5). Both these realities are included in the name of Mediator or High Priest. Christ is the great meeting-point between God and man. In him God comes nearer to men; in him also mankind can return to the Father. The whole life of Christ, above all the Paschal mystery of his departure from this world to the Father, was a priestly, a cultic mystery which was simultaneously a Redemption mystery in its orientation towards man.

### ***The saving action of Christ in the liturgy***

The whole sacramental liturgy of the Church takes its meaning from Christ, the original Sacrament. There is really only one Sacrament, and that is Christ: *Non est aliud sacramentum nisi Christus* (St. Augustine). Because each sacrament is a sign, it presupposes something visible; something materially perceptible. It is definitely an outward sign effects a divine reality. Such an outward sign was Christ during his earthly

life, and has been in a sense still more since his Resurrection. For although he was a sign of God during his earthly life, his visible humanity was then actually more concealing than revealing. Since his Resurrection, however, he has become the "life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor 15:45) and radiates the divine reality in his glorified Body. Since then he has been able as "the Son of God in power" (Rom 1:4) to impart that power to others also. The sign of Christ's humanity has become more transparent since his Resurrection, and more effectual.

The Resurrection made Christ the glorified Lord, whose worship is accepted by the Father. He sits now for ever at his right hand in the attitude of worship. In him we have an Advocate and Intercessor with the Father (1 John 2:1; Rom 8:34; Heb 7:23; John 14:16; 16:23). He stands before the Father as our High Priest by virtue of his high-priestly deed on the Cross: "We have . . . a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord" (Heb 8:1-2). But this eternal attitude of worship of the glorified Lord towards his Father is also oriented towards humanity in its dire need of salvation: "He holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:24-25).

The new people of God, the Church, unlike the Old Israel, have no use for many sacrifices (Heb 7:27). Nor do they have many priests but only one High Priest, Christ, who, through his one and only perfect Sacrifice on the Cross (Heb 9:25-28; 10:11-15) reconciled the Father. Now the one perfect mystery of Christ's Pasch, which honours the Father and redeems us, is eternally present to the Father in heaven. This is possible, because the redeeming deeds of Christ were the deeds of a God-Man, of a divine Person. As such they possess a value for eternity. This redeeming act of worship is forever present to the Father in the heavenly Lord.

Although the glorified Christ since his Resurrection and Ascension is a more effectual sign than during his earthly life, yet, as a sign, he is withdrawn from our eyes. Christ's risen life is hidden in God (Col 3.3) and although remaining a sign, he cannot be directly approached as a sign by the pilgrim Church on earth. Therefore the Church has

need of another sign in order to participate in the grace of Redemption. This new sign Christ has left us in the liturgy. Through the liturgy Christ's redeeming act is put within our reach. Through the sacraments redeeming worship of the Paschal mystery is present in the Church: *Quod conspicuum erat in Christo, transivit in Ecclesiae sacramenta—* "And so that which till then was visible in Christ has passed into the sacraments of the Church" (Leo the Great). Therefore every sacramental celebration is a meeting with Christ, according to this striking saying of St Ambrose: *Facie ad faciem te mihi, Christe, demonstrasti; in tuis te invenio sacramentis—* "Thou hast shown thyself to me face to face, O Christ; I find thee in thy sacraments" The sacramental liturgy must be conceived as a celebration of Christ's redeeming mystery, accomplished in us now.

"It is the ritual accomplishment of the redeeming work of Christ in the Church, and through her the actualisation of the divine redemptive act under the veil of symbols" as Odo Casel defines the liturgy. The union with Christ that is brought about through the sacramental celebration is described by Christ himself as that of the vine and the branches. St Paul uses such images as Head and members, Bridegroom and bride. The role of Christ in the life of the Church differs fundamentally from that of St John the Baptist during Christ's earthly life. It was his task as the friend of the Bridegroom (John 3.28-30) to point away from himself to Christ. Christ however is not only the guide to the Father, he is himself the way; he is not a mere friend of the Bridegroom, who withdraws modestly when the Bridegroom appears; he is himself the Bridegroom. And for that very reason, he seeks contact, intimate living contact with the bride, his Church, and her members.

## ***Worship of and through Christ***

### **i. Christ as the object of the worship of the Church**

Because the celebration of the sacramental liturgy effects union with Christ in his redemptive mystery, it is not surprising that the Church in her liturgy makes Christ the object of her adoration. It must be admitted that in later centuries under anti-Arian influence it has been sometimes too highlighted. At any rate, direct adoration of Christ in the liturgy is fully justified. Already in the New Testament

we find hymns borrowed from the liturgy of the early Christians, which are songs of praise to Christ (Col 1:13-20; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim:3-16). St John especially included in his Apocalypse, in the description of the heavenly liturgy, several hymns to Christ borrowed from the Christian liturgy in use in his time: among others, Rev 5:9-14.

Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.

Even a pagan, the younger Pliny, described Christians as men who assembled on Sundays, and in their assemblies sang songs of praise to Christ "as though he were a God": *Carmen Christo quasi Deo dictum*. The Church has continued this ancient Christian tradition throughout the course of her history. Direct adoration of the Person of Christ is expressed with peculiar force in the celebration of the Eucharist.

ii. Through Christ to the Father

The meeting with Christ is a deep reality in the liturgy, but it is not an ultimate reality. When therefore the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* gives its definition of the nature of the liturgy, it makes Christ at once the object and the subject of worship: it is "the public worship which the community of Christ's faithful pays to its Founder and through him to the Eternal Father". In the Council's Liturgical Constitution these ideas are touched on, when it is said of the Church that she "calls to her Lord and through him offers worship to the Eternal Father" (SC 7).

Ultimately the Church experiences the meeting with Christ as the start of a journey with him to meet the Father. Just as Christ through his Incarnation descended to us in order to precede us to the Father in an attitude of worship, so in each liturgical celebration he is in the midst of his community not merely turning to us in Redemption, but also to the Father in worship, that we through him as our Leader may be able to direct ourselves to the Father. In the liturgical celebration we meet Christ, but as a way to the Father. We go to the Father through Christ, our High Priest and Mediator, into whose risen life we are assumed in mysterious fashion. Through him we all have access to the Father (Eph 2:18).

For this reason the prayer of Christendom was from the beginning addressed to the Father through Christ the Mediator. This is the original Christian style of prayer. St Paul more than once expressly admonishes Christians that all praise and thanksgiving of the community must take place through Christ the Lord:

Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col 3:16-17).

Nearly every one of his epistles begins with praise or thanksgiving directly addressed to the Father through Christ the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 1:4-9; 2 Cor 1:3-5; Gal 1:3-5; Eph 1:3; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2-3). This tradition is confirmed by Origen, who says in his book on prayer that it should always be concluded "with a glorification of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit".

The tradition is in a sense weakened by the struggle against Arianism in the fourth century. For in reaction against this heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ people began to turn in prayer more directly to Christ. By addressing prayer indifferently to the Father or Christ, they wished to give expression to their conviction that Christ is God, on the same level as the Father. However justified this practice, it made a break in the centuries-old tradition by which, without ever denying the divinity of Christ, one went with him as Mediator to the Father. There was therefore a desire, particularly in the interest of the liturgical style of prayer, to maintain the old tradition, which explains the pronouncement of the Council of Hippo in 393: *Cum altari assistitur, semper ad Patrem dirigatur oratio*: "At the altar prayer is always to be addressed to the Father." The original doxology was not our present *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto*. It ran: *Gloria Patri per Filium in Spiritu Sancto*: "Glory to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit." When in the fourth century Arian propaganda began to interpret this as though Son and Holy Spirit were subject to the Father, the traditional formula was not immediately abandoned as it was pointed out that it was not suggesting intra-Trinitarian relationships, but the relationships of the three divine Persons in their outwardly directed work of Redemption. But the formula was eventually abandoned in order to prevent wrong interpretations.

## **Chapter IV**

### **The Holy Spirit in the Liturgy**

In the preceding chapter the liturgy was seen as the continuation of Christ's redemptive work. The Holy Spirit has a prominent role in the redemptive work of Christ. It is evident that he has a similar role in the liturgy, the continuation of the work of Redemption. First, let us see what the Scriptures tell us about the role of the Spirit in Christ's salvific action. We will then attempt to determine the place of the Holy Spirit in the worship of the Church.

#### ***A The Holy Spirit in the salvific work of Christ***

In the Creed the Church confesses that the Son of God was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. In different wording we find these facts attested in Holy Scripture. In the Gospel of St Luke, who brings into prominence with particular predilection the working of the Spirit of God in Christ and his Church, the message of the angel Gabriel to Mary is: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit, the power of the Highest (cf. Acts 1:8) the Giver of life, who was at the beginning of all earthly life (Gen 1:2) is also at the origin of the divine life in Mary (Luke 1:35) and in the Church (Acts 2:1-13). Mary was "with child of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18), "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20). The mystery of the descent of God to men is here seen to be also a mystery of the Holy Spirit, who makes possible the Incarnation of God.

The working of the Holy Spirit in Jesus has a second starting-point: he stands at the origin of Christ' mission as Messiah and Prophet. After his baptism in the Jordan "the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove" (Luke 3:21-22; cf. John 1:32-34). There is an allusion to this event in Acts 10:38, where it says that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (see also Heb 1:9). Even as the prophets were anointed for their mission so also the Prophet, the Messiah, became the Christ, the Anointed, not through material anointing, but through that of the Spirit himself (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27):

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives" (Luke 4:18)

In Luke's view the public life of Jesus is the carrying out of a prophetic messianic mission under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 4:1, 14-15). God's descent to men in Christ is not to be thought of apart from the operations of the Holy Spirit. So it comes to pass in the infant Church, so is it still in the Church of today when God comes under sacramental signs.

We can put Luke's Gospel and Acts side by side as respectively the story of Jesus on earth and the history of the early Church. They are subject to the same dynamism, the dynamism of the Spirit. This is perhaps most striking in the parallelism with which Luke describes the descent of the Spirit after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and again at Pentecost. Both are prepared by prayer (Luke 3:21; Acts 1:14), in both we note a descent of the Spirit in a material form, "in bodily form as a dove" (Luke 3:22) and in "tongues of fire" (Acts 2:3). Lastly, and this is really the core of the parallelism, both are the points of departure of a mission: Jesus receives his prophetic messianic mission; the Apostles likewise appear from then on as charismatically gifted prophets. In the fulfilling of their mission both Jesus and the Apostles (Acts 10:38; Luke 4:1, 14-15) are led and inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8, 33; 6:5, 8, 10; 7:55; 9:17, 22; 13:9 etc.).

### ***B. The Holy Spirit in the worship of the Church***

God's Spirit also brings about the proclamation of prayer and praise by reason of the messianic salvation that has come and been bestowed. The outpouring of God's Spirit (Is 32:15; 44:3; Ez 36:27; 37:14; Joel 3:1-2; Zech 12:10) brings about the praise of God. So Zechariah at the birth of John was filled with the Holy Spirit, and uttered his song of benediction (Luke 1:67). On old Simeon also, the Holy Spirit rested. Impelled by the Holy Spirit he came to the Temple and with the Child in his arms proclaimed the praise of God (Luke 2:23-32). The Holy Spirit is clearly associated with the concept of worship in Elizabeth's words: "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'" (Luke 1:41).



St John sees the passion and glorifying of Christ as strongly interwoven. The passion and death itself become exaltation and glorification. The moment of Christ's death becomes simultaneously the moment of the imparting of the Spirit (John 7:37-39). The imparting of the Holy Spirit begins at the moment of Jesus' glorification, which in John's view coincides with his death, the moment of his *Pascha*, of his passing from this world to the Father (John 13:1). We may relate this image to another passage in John on Jesus' death on the Cross: "One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (John 19:34). Water and blood are the two salvific signs of the Church: baptism and Eucharist. The water from the side recalls the "rivers of living water that flow out of his heart", and the Spirit imparted to us in baptism.

Elsewhere, John sees Jesus' departure to the Father as the necessary condition of the coming of the Holy Spirit: "If I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you" (John 16:7); So the Holy Spirit is the great Easter gift, which the glorified Lord offers to his Apostles on the very morning of his Resurrection. Under the influence of Luke's exposition we put into separate compartments in the celebration of the liturgical year what are in reality merely different aspects of the glorification of Christ. Therefore John speaks of Jesus' ascending to the Father on the morning of the Resurrection (John 20:17). As soon as he is glorified in his Resurrection, Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father (cf. Acts 8:34; Eph 1:19-22; 2:6; 1 Pet 3:22). This also explains why Christ on the morning of his resurrection imparts the Holy Spirit to his Apostles (John 20:19-23).

Sitting at God's right hand is an image by which the glorified state of Christ dwelling with the Father is expressed in NT writings (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:19-22; Col 3:1-2; Heb 1:3-13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2; Acts 2:32-33; 7:55-56). It is not a static condition, but suggests Christ's continual attitude of worship while turning redemptively towards humanity. He makes continual intercession for us and mediates on behalf of his Church (Heb 2:17; 7:25; 9:28). Now his intercession and mediation with the Father amounts to a continual asking for the Spirit (Jn 14:16) and consequently also to a continual sending of the Spirit.

Pentecost is therefore much more than a unique historical occurrence that took place fifty days after Easter. The glorified Son never interrupts his intercession with the

Father; he himself receives the promised Spirit from the Father and pours it out continually upon his Church (Acts 2:33). The miracle of Pentecost, as it is described in Acts 2, may not therefore be isolated from the many other occasions on which the Holy Spirit was received, related in Acts (see e.g. 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-8). True it has become the type for the receiving of the Spirit in the infant Church, because it was undoubtedly the most spectacular instance. The glorified Lord, who ceaselessly asks the Father to send the Spirit to us, is also continually sending that Spirit, and is ceaselessly present in the Spirit in his Church.

From all this it is evident that the ascending line to God the Father in the Church community is simply unthinkable without the activity of the Holy Spirit. It is he who inspires the Church not only to continue and to proclaim God's work of salvation, but ultimately also to direct herself in Christ towards the Father. The Spirit, who is also the Spirit of Christ, dominates the existence of the baptized (Rom 8:9). He is the Spirit of the Son, therefore the baptized Christian, through receiving the Spirit of the Son, is also himself a son of God, and can as such call God his Father in the Spirit: "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. . . . You have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:14-16). A parallel is in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: "You are now sons. Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!'" (4:6). It is the Spirit that prays in us and in us speaks to the Father: "The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with signs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26).

This is why Paul calls the infant Christian community of Corinth, a temple of God's Spirit: "Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16). And a temple is surely made to glorify God (cf. 1 Cor 6:19). So the Spirit dwells in the Church as in a temple, in order to make it possible for her to glorify God . . . to proclaim the glorious acts of him who has called her out of darkness into his marvellous light (see 1 Peter 2:5,9). Built on the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets, the Church grows into a "holy temple of the Lord", "the dwelling-place of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2:20-22).

### ***C. The role of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy***

On the basis of the biblical data developed above, it follows that the liturgy in its descending line is an imparting of the Holy Spirit. Christ the Lord is present in it acting for our salvation, and imparts his Spirit to us. In this way the Church becomes a participant in the worship of the Son; the Son's movement of praise and thanksgiving to the Father – the liturgy's ascending line — is imparted through the Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, to the Church. Thus neither salvation nor worship is to be thought of apart from the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Son, acting for our salvation, causes his Spirit to descend upon the Church and in this Spirit we, through the Son, offer to the Father the praise and thanksgiving that are his due. The terminal point of the sanctifying work of the Father is the Holy Spirit, who in his turn is the origin from which the ascent to the Father begins. The liturgy has been defined as God's descent to us and our ascent to him. Both the movements come to pass through Christ, while having the Spirit as their beginning and end. Holy Spirit as the soul of the Church is her principle of unity. The Church's prayer to the Father is always a prayer in the "we" form, the "we" of the Church community, constituted by the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit is thus included in the "we" of the Church community, it should cause no surprise that only very rarely does the Church address the Holy Spirit in a prayer. It is he who prays in and with the Church to the Father.

The liturgy does not consider the Holy Spirit in isolation but always in his Trinitarian union with Father and Son and in his salvific union with the Church, which he inspires and sanctifies, and through Christ directs to the Father. All of which presupposes an imparting of the Spirit to the Church. This however does not happen automatically, but in answer to the Church's supplication. The Church, therefore, prays in her liturgy for the Holy Spirit, in other words the liturgy has an *epicletic character*. The descent of the Holy Spirit, which takes place in the sacramental liturgy, is always the fruit of supplication, of the petitionary prayer of the Church, of her calling upon the Father (*epiclesis*) to send the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus (Luke 3.21) and that on the Apostles (Acts 1.14) were likewise accompanied and prepared by prayer.

The special characteristic of the Church's worship in this intermediate stage between the Ascension and the Second Coming is the apparent paradox that it is at the same time *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*: thanksgiving and praise remembering the saving deeds of God but at the same time a calling down of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ promised to send from his Father. The glorified Lord begs the Spirit of the Father for his Church. The Church appropriates to herself this prayer of Christ for the Spirit.

The more intense the actualisation of Christ's salvific action in the liturgical celebration, the more intense we may expect to be the presence and intervention of the Holy Spirit. But the Eucharist, the core of all worship in the Church, is pre-eminently the sacrament of Christ's salvific presence; we may be certain therefore that there the working of the Holy Spirit will be most intense. The mystery of incarnation was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, so also the mystery of the sacramental coming of the Lord under the forms of bread and wine will not be conceivable without the working of the Holy Spirit. Many Eastern Liturgies have a consecration-epiclesis, whose basic form goes back to Cyril of Jerusalem in the second half of the fourth century. In this Epiclesis, the Holy Spirit is called down upon the offerings, that he may turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Besides this, they possess the so-called communion-epiclesis, imploring that the Holy Spirit may be sent down upon the offerings that they may be for the salvation of those who receive them in communion and especially may make them one in heart and mind.

### **1. The Holy Spirit prepares for the reception of Christ**

In the liturgy of the New Covenant every liturgical action, especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, is an encounter between Christ and the Church. The liturgical assembly derives its unity from the "communion of the Holy Spirit" who gathers the children of God into the one Body of Christ. This assembly transcends racial, cultural, social - indeed, all human affinities. The assembly should prepare itself to encounter its Lord and to become "a people well disposed." The preparation of hearts is the joint work of the Holy Spirit and the assembly, especially of its ministers. The grace of the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father's will.

## **2. The Holy Spirit recalls the mystery of Christ**

The Spirit and the Church cooperate to manifest Christ and his work of salvation in the world through the liturgy. The liturgy is the memorial of the mystery of salvation. The Holy Spirit is the Church's living memory (cf Jn 14:26).

*The Word of God.* The Holy Spirit first recalls the meaning of the salvation event to the liturgical assembly by giving life to the Word of God, which is proclaimed so that it may be received and lived:

In the celebration of the liturgy, Sacred Scripture is extremely important. From it come the lessons that are read and explained in the homily and the psalms that are sung. It is from the Scriptures that the prayers, collects, and hymns draw their inspiration and their force, and that actions and signs derive their meaning (SC 24).

The Holy Spirit gives a spiritual understanding of the Word of God to those who read or hear it, according to the dispositions of their hearts. By means of the words, actions, and symbols that form the structure of a celebration, the Spirit puts both the faithful and the ministers into a living relationship with Christ, the Word and Image of the Father, so that they can live out the meaning of what they hear, contemplate, and do in the celebration. "By the saving word of God, faith . . . is nourished in the hearts of believers. By this faith then the congregation of the faithful begins and grows" (PO 4).

The proclamation does not stop with a teaching; it elicits the response of faith as consent and commitment, directed at the covenant between God and his people. Once again it is the Holy Spirit who gives the grace of faith, strengthens it and makes it grow in the community. The liturgical assembly is first of all a communion in faith.

*Anamnesis.* The liturgical celebration always refers to God's saving interventions in history. In the Liturgy of the Word the Holy Spirit "recalls" to the assembly all that Christ has done for us. In keeping with the nature of liturgical actions and the ritual traditions of the churches, the celebration "makes a remembrance" of the marvelous works of God in an anamnesis which may be more or less developed. The Holy Spirit who thus awakens the memory of the Church then inspires thanksgiving and praise (doxology).

### **3. The Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ**

Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present. The Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated. It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present. Together with the anamnesis, the epiclesis is at the heart of each sacramental celebration, most especially of the Eucharist:

You ask how the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine . . . the Blood of Christ I shall tell you: the Holy Spirit comes upon them and accomplishes what surpasses every word and thought . . . Let it be enough for you to understand that it is by the Holy Spirit, just as it was of the Holy Virgin and by the Holy Spirit that the Lord, through and in himself, took flesh (John Damascene, *De Fide Orth.*4:13).

The Holy Spirit's transforming power in the liturgy hastens the coming of the kingdom and the consummation of the mystery of salvation. While we wait in hope he causes us really to anticipate the fullness of communion with the Holy Trinity. Sent by the Father who hears the epiclesis of the Church, the Spirit gives life to those who accept him and is, even now, the "guarantee" of their inheritance (cf. Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22).

In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body. The Holy Spirit is like the sap of the Father's vine which bears fruit on its branches (Jn 15:1-17). The most intimate cooperation of the Holy Spirit and the Church is achieved in the liturgy. The Spirit, who is the Spirit of communion, abides indefectibly in the Church. For this reason the Church is the great sacrament of divine communion which gathers God's scattered children together. Communion with the Holy Trinity and fraternal communion are inseparably the fruit of the Spirit in the liturgy (1 Jn 1:3-7).

## **Chapter V**

### **THE SIGN CHARACTER OF THE LITURGY**

It is the nature of the liturgy to be an encounter with God through Christ in union with the Holy Spirit. This encounter takes place however under the veil of sacred signs. The sign character is part of the nature of liturgical reality. In the liturgy the sanctification of man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses and effected in a way that corresponds with each of these signs (SC 7). Thus sacramental celebration is woven from signs and symbols. In keeping with the divine pedagogy of salvation, their meaning is rooted in the work of creation and in human culture, specified by the events of the Old Covenant and fully revealed in the person and work of Christ. Apart from that, the sign character is an essential feature of Church's worship, distinguishing it from all kinds of extra-liturgical prayer.

#### ***Signs in general***

In order to understand the sign character of the liturgy, we must first consider the notion of sign in general. In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God.

God speaks to man through the visible creation. The material cosmos is so presented to man's intelligence that he can read there traces of its Creator (Ps 19; Wis 13:1, Rom 1:20; Acts 14:17). Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, the tree and its fruit speak of God and symbolize both his greatness and his nearness. Thus St

Bonaventure called the creation *vestigia Dei*, footprints of God, which he has left behind on the earth and that bear witness to his invisible being.

In as much as they are creatures, these perceptible realities can become means of expressing the action of God who sanctifies men, and the action of men who offer worship to God. The same is true of signs and symbols taken from the social life of man: washing and anointing, breaking bread and sharing the cup can express the sanctifying presence of God and man's gratitude toward his Creator. The great religions of mankind witness, often impressively, to this cosmic and symbolic meaning of religious rites. The liturgy of the Church presupposes, integrates and sanctifies elements from creation and human culture, conferring on them the dignity of signs of grace, of the new creation in Jesus Christ.

### ***What is a sign?***

A sign is thing, an action or a person that not only makes itself known by means of direct perception of the senses, but also communicates something to our minds that escapes our sensory perception. *Aliud videtur, aliud intelligitur*- "We see one thing and understand another".

A sign therefore has a reason for its existence only if the reality to be known is hidden and absent from us. As soon as the thing signified becomes visible, the sign is superfluous. By reason of its nature the sign is always a bridge between two worlds, one of which is hidden from the other.

### ***The function of the sign***

Even when the sign is a person or a material thing, it always has the value of an action. For it appears as an agent with respect to the knowing subject, in that it makes known to him something deeper outside the physical reality immediately perceptible to him. The action that this supposes is not an action of the thing itself, but of the person or the community that stands invisibly behind it and makes this thing a sign.

Now the function of the sign (its "action") is at the same time to reveal and to conceal. It reveals something, in so far as it has something in common with that thing; it



hides and conceals in so far as it is not the thing signified: it is distinct from it. It is only the springboard to it, the means of making contact with the invisible reality, which it makes present to us. It is constantly a screen between us and the hidden reality, but a screen of a special kind, transparent and with an outlook on the invisible.

Thus we discover a twofold function of the sign: it reveals the hidden reality and puts us in contact with it. The person who stands behind the sign, who made it a sign, comes to meet the person who approaches it as a sign. To manifest and to unite are the two first functions of the sign.

To this is added a third function, in a sense of an incidental nature, but which will reveal itself as of very great importance for the liturgical sign. Through the sign we get to know the invisible, the signified, and come into contact with it, but that through its concealing character the sign is at the same time a hindrance to knowing the signified completely and coming directly into contact with it. This calls forth the third function of the sign: the concealing revelation that brings about only a partial union of the persons on the two sides of the sign. This awakens an irresistible longing for a fuller knowledge and a deeper union.

The sign undoubtedly makes us know, but, by the very incompleteness of the knowledge that it bestows, suggests and invites to a complete knowledge and union, which it makes us long for and which will one day make the sign superfluous. Thus viewed the sign is always a pledge or foretaste of a coming full realization and has naturally only a provisional character.

### ***Kinds of signs***

We can divide signs into natural and free signs.

In natural signs the inner relation between the sign and the thing signified is independent of the will of man. It comes from the nature of the things themselves (smoke—fire, footstep—man, photograph, etc.). In this case there is always at least a relationship of dependency between the sign and the thing signified. Just because they are independent of the will of man, such signs hold good anywhere. They have a universal value.

Free signs are things, actions or gestures, which are freely chosen by man to express realities with which they have no natural connection (a flag, red as a stop-signal). It is possible that whole groups of men when they want to express a certain reality will have recourse to a different sign (e.g. white is a sign of mourning in China and Japan). Hence these signs are generally dependent on the cultural milieu and are called cultural signs. Naturally they have no universal value and cannot be recognised by everybody for what they are. To understand the meaning of these signs one must know the intention of those who chose them or the culture in which they originated.

Images and symbols are special sorts of signs. If between the sign and the signified a relation of resemblance exists, then one will speak of an image. Thus Christ is called the image of God (Col 1.15). Every child is in a certain sense the image of his parents. Symbols are a special kind of signs which may have many meanings or allusions especially in the religious context. All symbols are signs, but not all signs are symbols. Smoke for example, is a sign of fire, but it is not a symbol of it. Thus symbol is never a natural sign, but a cultural sign, therefore a freely chosen sign (Cross).

The ancient Graeco-Roman world—and it was their ideas which chiefly influenced the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy and Eastern Christianity (see for example their theology of the icon)—emphasized a certain identity between the sign and the thing signified inasmuch as the hidden reality that is signified is in a certain sense actualised through the sign, and the person who approaches and looks on the sign comes into contact with and obtains a part in that invisible reality. The sign is then seen as the visible mode of being of an invisible spiritual reality, as an epiphany, a revelation of it.

### ***Theological basis of the sign character***

It is Christ's Incarnation that is the theological basis of the entire symbolism of the liturgy. Thanks to the Incarnation, whereby for the first time the material-bodily condition was divinised and became a sign of the heavenly world. All that is material can now be raised to the level of a sacramental sign. Christ is the living sign of the Father, God's fatherly love visible among us. In him the divine life has become apparent and

visible, audible and palpable to us. As St John puts it with gripping realism at the beginning of his first epistle:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest and we saw it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.(1 John 1.1-3).

Above all his sacrifice on the Cross is a sacramental-liturgical event: under the external signs of his human action, his divine salvific will and his eternal oblation to the Father are concealed and revealed to the faithful

Since his Resurrection, Christ is invisible to us. The sign character of his divinised humanity has passed into the holy signs of the liturgy. What was made possible through the Incarnation has become actuality in the liturgy of the Church. The Person of Christ and his redeeming action remain within our reach thanks to the sacraments, those signs perceptible to our senses. (cf p28)

Man cannot know, except from what is perceptible to the senses He does not come into contact with God and his divine world except by way of the visible world, which he can see, hear, touch and experience with his senses. In order to meet God as a community the members must meet one another. It is for this that they come together in church, which in its etymological meaning is primarily the meeting-place of the ecclesia, of the community. Now men can only come into contact with each other by way of what is bodily and material. What lives inside me can only become knowable to my fellow man through my bodily state. The slightest gesture, the least movement that I make, the apparently imperceptible change in the expression of my face can be a sign for others of what I inwardly think and feel. Therefore, if we wish as a Church to appear before God in a communal attitude of worship, it cannot be but through signs. Only through praying, singing, and performing definite religious actions together can we give expression to our communal feeling before God.

### ***Nature of liturgical signs***

Because liturgical signs are wholly dependent on Christ and his Church, it is clear that they are free cultural signs. They are determined by the free choice of Christ or his

Church. As their meaning depends on the person, who instituted them, in order to understand and interpret them rightly, we must know the intention of Christ and his Church when they instituted these signs.

Christ and the Church have given a New Testament orientation to various natural symbols. Thus water, a natural symbol of cleansing, becomes the liturgical symbol of the spiritual washing away of sins. Bread, which symbolizes bodily nourishment, becomes a liturgical sign of spiritual nourishment. Then Christ and the Church also adopted the already existing religious symbols of the surrounding cultural world, transposing them into the key of the New Testament. So the Eucharistic celebration, in its original structure, is a Jewish religious ritual meal, by which Yahweh was praised and thanks were given for food and for the delivery out of Egypt. Christ takes over this rite *in toto*, but makes of it the thankful memorial meal of the redemption. Baptism in the Jewish sects of Christ's time was a sign of joining these sects; Christ takes it over and makes it the holy symbol of entering into his Church community.

The Church, in imitation of Christ, continued to adopt Jewish and pagan usages. When, through the preaching of the Apostles to the heathen, she comes into contact with Hellenistic Graeco-Roman culture, she borrows freely from that also. In order to grasp the meaning of the liturgical symbols which stem from Christ we shall have to appeal to their institution by him as it appears in Scripture, and to the Jewish cultural world in which he lived. Usually sacramental signs are presented as signs of an inward grace. The sign character of the sacramental liturgy is, however much richer and more comprehensive. These signs refer not only to an inner event of grace in the present, but also to the past, and always contain a reference to the unveiled state of the final consummation.

- (a) *Signum commemorationis* (a memorial sign)
- (b) *Signum demonstrativum* (a sign that reveals in the present an inner event of grace)
- (c) *Signum prognosticum* (a sign that refers to the state of final consummation, at the second coming of the Lord)

"O Sacred banquet wherein Christ is received; the memory of his passion is renewed (past), the mind is filled with grace (present) and a pledge of future glory is given to us (future)". (St. Thomas Aquinas)

## INTRODUCTION TO LITURGY

*Etymology*

*Leitourgia in the New Testament*

*Liturgy in the New Economy*

*Response to the action of God*

*Different Definitions of Liturgy*

*The theology of liturgy according to Vatican II*

*Historical survey of the liturgy*

*Lex orandi lex credendi*

### **Chapter I** THE PLACE OF CULT IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF MAN

*The nature of Christian Liturgy*

*Full efficacy of the liturgy*

*Theocentric character of the liturgy*

### **Chapter II** THE TRINITARIAN BASIS OF THE LITURGY

*Trinity and Unity*

*Ontological Trinity and Economic Trinity*

*A Patre, per Filium eius, Jesum Christum, in Spiritu Sancto, ad Patrem*

*The formula a, per, in, ad in ancient tradition*

### **Chapter III** THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN THE LITURGY

*Priestly character of Christ*

*Christ as liturgical mystery*

*The saving action of Christ in the liturgy*

*Worship of and through Christ*

## **Chapter IV** THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LITURGY

*A. The Holy Spirit in the salvific work of Christ*

*B. The Holy Spirit in the worship of the Church*

*C. The role of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy*

## **Chapter V** THE SIGN CHARACTER OF THE LITURGY

*Signs in general*

*What is a sign?*

*The function of the sign*

*Kinds of signs*

*Theological basis of the sign character*

*Nature of liturgical signs*

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